

THE BLAST

LYDIA GIBSON

VOL. 1

SAN FRANCISCO, APRIL 1, 1916

No. 10



General \$ in Command

General \$ in Command

David Leigh

THE cartoon in this week's BLAST shows what General Dollar knows, what he will never forget, so long as people continue to worship his coat of arms. They call him "Revenge" in this Mexican instance, but that is only a nickname—one of half a dozen *noms de plume* which the old boy uses to avoid recognition. Sometimes he takes the name of "The Missionary Kid," "The Disinterested Developer," "The Slugger for Right," etc., etc., but it all amounts to the same thing. General Dollar himself is the head of the pseudonym array and his curves remain the same even though he ornament himself with a barrelful of terms.

And how he whines when the march begins! It is either "poor water," "poor air" or bunions on his "horses'" hoofs. He whimpers like a baby being broken of the sucking habit. And why? So that more "pacifiers" in the shape of human orderlies will be forthcoming. Yes, and he whines for nothing else. His pressmen whine for nothing else. They dread the day when the rattle shall be put out of reach—when they will have to drink plain milk unsugared—and have to *earn* the milk. Canny is General Dollar, far-seeing, calculating. He knows that Division follows such diversion even when the diversion is sham. He therefore makes it his business to take the minds of his minions off whatever pain they suffer while in his service by holding out the reward of—Thanks, in the form of a copper badge of honor!

And why does the old party decorate himself so extravagantly with misleading titles, with ornate reasons for his advance over feelings and hopes? Why does he do his person up like a Christmas tree when sallying forth to the echo of jangles? The reason is not cryptic. The old man has a horror of the nude. He has a horror of it because his own person unadorned is so repulsive. Fancy General Dollar showing himself without even the impress of a star on his breast! The idea is unthinkable. Any glass would crack if he stood up without furbelows in front of it.

And in the case of Mexico, what a spectacle we have of a sword-studded dinosaur in pursuit of one little frijole! And how edifying it is to see this armored brute chasing the husk of a single tamale on the pretext of avenging an insult to one of his extremities! For that matter, what kind of a yarn is it we are told, of how Villa with a handful of followers "invaded" a townful of cartridge-belted citizens with the result that seventy-one Mexicans were killed to seven slain innocents? Villa must have paraded up and down the main street of the village for the benefit of American sharpshooters, if the story be true. How else could the loss be such a one-sided affair? The tale is all very patriotic and vengeance-compelling, but it doesn't hang fire.

But a long tail needs but slight excuse to flap in the breeze. Our sensitive General has been pecked at (he says so) and a drop of blood shows on his vest front. Incidentally, he is the possessor of specially-constructed goggles which aid their owner to detect valuable oils and minerals; so Forward, boys, in the name of curves, cracks and cudgels! They're only Greasers anyhow. Instead of manufacturing tamales, let's put up the real thing—in cans.

There we have the General undraped but accurate. He lives off false faith, he feeds on abortive concepts, he

waxes round and rosy when accoutered fools obey him in the name of outraged feelings he never at any time possessed.

It is the veriest rot to use the word "revenge" in the present connection. Why, if there is any revenge due, it is from the Mexicans for the depredations of the Gringos on their land and life. Haven't the Pierces and the Watereses and the Rockefellers and the Hearsts for years been making meal of the bones and bodies of Mexicans, depriving them of food, depriving them of sleep, grinding the very marrow out of the heart and sinews of this people in order to make their already bloated profits bulge still further? It is the Mexicans who stand aggrieved. It is they who would be justified in putting to rout the whole flimflamming lot of greedy poachers who have squatted on their land.

Poor Mexico! Poor in one sense, yet in the face of what she has accomplished by way of breaking the yoke of oppression which for centuries has held her down, as a nation she makes the soft, satisfied, subservient American look like a pot of mucilage. The Mexicans are really fighting for something. They didn't confine their efforts to Words. They have sought things, taken them and *used* them. But the American? He still wants to be "represented" and he is—by the filchers. Spokesmen do it all for him. That is why nothing is ever done to benefit him.

But in the case of Mexico, part of the chain has been broken: not many links, but broken just the same. And when men have the force and courage to break a single link, they will re-break that chain even though it be soldered by the master tinsmith of all the world, General Dollar. You cannot put even a new baby back into the womb. Nature takes care of that. She contracts the orifice through which new life has emerged.

So with Mexico. General Dollar and all his tribe will find themselves unable to cram Emancipated men back into the slavish hole from which they have released themselves. And a cheer should go up from the heart of every Liberal that this is so. For the Mexican's fight is not a single fight. It is the fight of all those who are striving to throw off the stranglehold of mediaevalism, the scrawny clutch of a rapacity doomed finally to sink of its own over-weight.

Long life to the sons of Mexico who are making this fight! And a curse on the head of any and all who would attempt to block her in her glorious struggle for a free existence. May the clang of General Dollar's fall resound in her ears till her sleepest children shall stand up and wonder why they have slept so long.

Our Task

SUCH equilibrium as our present world possesses is the precarious balancing of a pyramid of opposing selfishness upon an apex of wealth-begotten aristocracy. The science of this equilibrium is our orthodox political economy—the most dismal of sciences, with the most dismal of subjects. The human world will never stand solid until it rests upon the broad basis of simple humanity, whose apex is moral worth. So to place it is the task of our epoch.

David Caplan

THE TRIAL of David Caplan will open in Los Angeles on April 3d. He is charged with complicity in blowing up the *Times* Building, on October 1st, 1910. J. B. McNamara pleaded guilty to the charge and is now serving a life sentence in San Quentin. Mathew Schmidt was recently convicted in the same connection and sentenced to life imprisonment.

What is the outlook for David Caplan?

Let us look the situation square in the face.

The Merchants & Manufacturers' Association, the Otis interests, the Burns Detective Agency, the prosecution of Los Angeles County and the whole respectable, law-abiding citizenship of Los Angeles is and has been a solid unit for the conviction of Schmidt and Caplan. They have carried out the first part of their program to the extent of a life sentence for Schmidt. They will carry out the second part with the same precision. They may even carry out some other parts later on. It is no use fooling ourselves by hiding our heads, ostrich like, in the bushes and pretending not to see. No one else but ourselves are the sufferers from this kind of wilful blindness.

It is not a question of guilt or innocence. To Labor's enemies, the worker charged with active opposition to capital, is guilty even if innocent. To me, the worker at the bar of his enemies is innocent even if guilty. Innocent or guilty, Caplan is convicted beforehand in the courts owned by the masters. Caplan realizes this, as every intelligent worker must realize it. Therefore Caplan has decided, I understand, to cast the old tactics overboard. He knows he has nothing to hope from the legal line of defense followed in the Schmidt case. In that trial the labor and legal advisers of Schmidt took the stand that Mat could hope for a "fair trial" and "justice" at the hands of the Otises and their hired lackeys. If they honestly believed it, in spite of all past experience to the contrary, they were criminally stupid. If they merely pretended to believe such fairy tales, their sacrifice of Schmidt was the most damnable treachery.

I have been informed, on reliable authority, that Caplan refuses to be similarly sacrificed. He has nothing to hope from a legal defence on conservative lines. He has nothing to lose by taking the boldest stand. He has everything to gain—and first of all his self-respect—by facing his enemies as a man, a conscious worker and intelligent rebel against injustice and persecution.

It is therefore that I rejoice in the determination of Caplan to follow a new line of procedure in his trial. And with me, every true friend of labor must rejoice in the brave stand of David Caplan. Enough of the cowardice and hypocrisy imposed upon Labor's prisoners of war by pretended friends and spokesmen of Labor. Enough of the crawling, begging and pleading at the feet of the masters. Such an attitude leads only to the gallows and the penitentiary. The strong scorn the weaklings. And justly so. That's why no true man has any sympathy with cowardice and meekness. That's way Labor, the great

giant, is making itself the laughing stock in the eyes of the world by its eternal submission. It is time, high time, for the giant to straighten his bent back, look the world square in the face, and boldly proclaim: I can, because I will and dare!

Not till then will Labor have any real claim to respect, nor the power to achieve. It will be the proudest moment in the life of labor, its greatest red letter day, when at last the rebel shall arise out of the ranks and throw the challenge into the very face of the masters: YOU are the guilty, who feed on the blood of our children and devour the bodies of our people. You are the real murderers and enemies of man. I challenge your iniquitous justice, I defy your rules of the game!

The day will come when the rebel worker shall take this position. The day must come. And that day will carry joy and courage to the hearts of the disinherited and rally the best elements of labor around their *real* spokesmen.

The penitentiaries of this country are filled with Labor's prisoners of war. What power keeps them there? Surely not the handful of guards. Were Labor to make a determined demand for their release, no power would dare resist them. The unionists of San Francisco pride themselves, for instance, on their organized strength in this city and State. But what avails their strength if they lack the will, the intelligence or courage to use it for the benefit of the workers? San Quentin penitentiary is full of labor men. Why does Organized Labor on the Coast not demand the immediate release of the McNamaras, Albert Ryan, Ford and Suhr, Schmidt and Caplan? The Governor of the State is a "labor" man; the sheriff is a "labor" man; the warden of San Quentin a "labor" man—all put in office by the direct vote or consent of Labor. Organized Labor on the Coast has a great deal of influence, you know. But for what purpose are they using that influence? To give labor politicians fat jobs and a chance to betray the workers. If the unions of San Francisco would merely threaten a general strike the prison doors would quickly open to the McNamaras, the Schmidts and the Caplans.

Labor has the power. No one doubts it. The tragedy of it is, the labor politicians within the unions are the first to paralyze every effort of the workers to assert their power.

It is therefore that men like David Caplan must rely on their own strength and on the resources of the more revolutionary element among the workers. True, the unions now and then help with money. But it is not money that is of main importance in such cases. If the workers have to match dollars with the masters, the workers lose. The moral support of labor, boldly and publicly expressed, is of a thousandfold more effect than the treasury of the richest union. If the convention of the American Federation of Labor, recently held in San Francisco, had voiced a strong public protest in the case of Mathew Schmidt, then on trial, it would have accomplished a great deal more than the \$3000 voted in secret session.

It is the moral support of all labor that David Caplan

demands, and has the right to demand. He demands it on the ground that when he faces the judge and jury in the Los Angeles courtroom, it will not be only David Caplan but *militant Labor* on trial. That being the situation, the case must be fought as a phase of the great labor struggle, a chapter in the social war.

To further this purpose, David Caplan has secured the services of Jacob Margolis, an attorney from Pittsburgh—a man of experience in the labor struggle, one with courage and ability to fight the case of Caplan on the basis of the larger issues involved, the issues of the class war.

Mr. Margolis will be assisted by other lawyers, but his instructions from Caplan himself are to ignore precedent and tradition, and to fight the case on revolutionary lines.

We urge our friends and comrades everywhere to rally to the aid of David Caplan. Make your voice resound throughout the country. Let us be done, once and for all, with legal respectability and conformity, so much prized by those who are anxious about their sinecures in the unions or their own precious skins. We have sacrificed enough rebels to the Moloch of legality and cowardice. Let us for once show that we are men, with the self-respect and spirit of manhood.

Alexander Berkman

In the Eyes of the Future

Charles Erskine Scott Wood

DAVID CAPLAN is to be tried April 3d. So many men are tried, hung and imprisoned that one more or less makes little difference. Suppose a thousand years from now some one digs up the fact that Caplan or Schmidt or McNamara was tried and imprisoned. It will look mighty small to the people of the distant future. But suppose a scholar writing the history of our times finds that we had a very curious civilization: Society divided into two classes, the one devouring the other and the two constantly at war in a never-ceasing struggle. That will certainly be interesting, even a thousand years from now. It will be a chapter in the life of the race—a mighty important chapter. Then our scholar of a thousand years hence will go on to show that the struggle was a life and death struggle. It meant life or death to the laboring masses. It meant life or death to society. It meant life or death to the race. For a race grows out of the mass, not from the few at the top. Nations perish when their masses become thin and weak. Our historian will record that the struggle to the death or life was a property struggle: a few men owning the earth and the social structure. These were called Capitalists, and they sought to continue the toilers in slavery and deny them their fair share of the wealth produced by their labor from the natural resources of the earth. Then this historian will show the terribly interesting fact—interesting even a thousand years from now—that the great mass of laborers were held in a bondage the cruelty of which was measured by what men, women and children of the wage slave class could exist on. Indeed, the children could not all exist, but enough survived to keep the mills, mines and factories

going. In the steel industry the average wage was about \$475 a year, and about 35,000 men were killed every year in this industry. That the workers lived in squalor and starvation, the children born only into a life of grinding toil and degradation. That poverty compelled these slaves to set their children to work at the tender age of ten, or even at six and seven years. That from time to time the misery of the serfs forced a rebellion, in which the capitalists' government and hired professional slayers mercilessly shot, burned, jailed and hung the rebels. Then if it appears that in some such rebellion, or in a fury—not against miserable subordinates, but against the system and its maintainers—some men struck against the system and its maddening injustice or, if you please, against its supporters and profitters, it will be exceedingly interesting even a thousand years hence to read of these life grasping spasms, and then the names of the men who came out of the dull mass and sacrificed themselves in unequal combat against society and law will really be noteworthy. Just as Jack Cade's name is now noteworthy in English history. History is ceasing to see in him a rioter, rebel and destroyer of society, but rather one seeking to save. What he began, Cromwell continued. The end is afar off. Voltaire and Rousseau, the theorists, Danton and Mirabeau, the men of action, fought and destroyed "society," yet Carlyle says the French Revolution restored his faith in an overruling Providence.

It is not only the great revolutions that mark man's progress. John Brown, the one man, marks the abolition of slavery quite as well as the whole Civil War. All the men who lead in saving the race—that is, the common people—are law breakers, whether it be Cromwell or John Brown. So a thousand years hence the men accused of lawlessness—as David Caplan now is—may be judged as men aiming against a cancer in the social body.

It will be interesting to know what our scholar of a thousand years hence will say of Labor out of whose ranks these men came and for whose benefit they struck. I care as little as will our scholar of the future to discuss their wisdom. What concern is their wisdom, to the people for whom they sacrificed life and liberty? Will Labor disown and desert them? or secretly support and openly deny them? or wholly and as one man openly adopt and defend them? These will be interesting questions—even a thousand years hence.

* * *

PRESIDENT WILSON in a recent address said: "Law is a very complicated term. It includes many things that do not engage our affections."

Less scholastic, but more positively truthful, he might have said: "Law is a hell of a mess; it stifles human affections."

* * *

WAR is wrong in itself, even though a congress or a majority decide upon it. Let them who want war pay for all preparedness and do all the fighting—and there won't be any.

Past and Present

A. Mack

THE workers of early civilization were chattel slaves, not from choice, but from compulsion.

The workers of modern civilization are wage slaves, also not from choice, but from compulsion.

Chattel slaves worked hard, and received enough food and care to preserve their health and thus their power to labor; the death of a chattel slave was a distinct loss to the boss, as he had to buy or capture another to replace the lost one.

Wage slaves work harder, produce more, and receive of the wealth they produce just enough to enable them to replace their lost energy and to rear more wage slaves. The death of a wage slave is no loss to the boss; he does not have to buy or capture another—there are always plenty more in the industrial reserve army, and these hunger drives to the vacant job.

There appears some likeness between the positions of the workers at the two opposite ends of civilization, inasmuch that they both are slaves, not from choice, but from compulsion. However, the compelling forces are not identical, as in early days it was the captor's lash, while today it is hunger's lash that is the driving power.

The early chattel slave was a free man before he was a slave, and lived a healthy, careless life among his natural surroundings in the bosom of his communal tribe. No inducements could entice him from his home of freedom to become the servant of any boss for any number of hours a day and a reward of a bare existence.

Direct action was necessary to force him into servitude. Before he would work for a master he had to be made a captive and driven by the overseer's whip to dispense with his laboring power. As he was ignorant he could not be expected to see that his interests and those of his master were identical, and as a consequence of his not comprehending this moral precept of the boss, and his respect for the masters' law and order being likewise imperfect, he was ever prone to the practice of Direct Action to liberate himself from his degrading drudgery.

We can thus see that the masters' dislike of Direct Action had its roots in the economic circumstances which piloted society through to modern capitalism. Is it any wonder that that early dislike has grown more fearful?

The modern wage slave, on the other hand, was born a slave; he never knew what freedom was; he has no chance of becoming a free man by running away from his master; if he runs away from one it is only to look for another—there is no escape for him, the relentless lash of hunger holds and drives him to the task. He and his class belong to the master class more securely than did the chattel slave. But the grinning tragedy of it all is that the average wage slave cannot realize it; he has become so thoroughly soaked with the master class ethics and education that he is now—according to the master—intelligent enough to recognize that his interests are wrapped up with those of the boss, and as a result he doesn't believe in using Direct Action to improve his position. Being also a fervent worshipper of the boss' law and order, and of his constitutional way of doing things, he entrusts his fate to the politician, who holds the power through the use of masters' law and order apparatus of *improving* (?) the workers' conditions without at the same time interfering with the profits of the boss. This method satisfies both the wage slave and the boss, and is known by the respectable name of political action. By the professional politician or by the aspiring politician it is reckoned far superior in effectiveness to *that damnable Direct Action*, because the latter vulgar method not only improves the workers' condition at the expense of the boss, but it removes the opportunity of the aspiring politician's reaping the glory and the graft. If there is one hopeful sign on the worker's horizon it is just this, that he appears to be shaking the stupor from his brain and commencing to see that his political flirting is useless, and that his only hope of emancipation is through the industrially organized might of the working class; for "the work of emancipating the workers must be the work of the workers themselves."

Labor and Song

Leah Lowensohn

FROM Langland's "Piers the Plowman" to this very day, a period of more than five hundred and fifty years, the same tale has been told, the same song has been sung, in literature, painting and sculpture, of the lives of those who labor. The condition of the worker has changed virtually very little during all these centuries. And this story has been so often told that when we hear it today, it fails to stir us to action. We have become so accustomed to the sound that it fails to make an impression. And yet the tale cannot be told too often.

It was Langland who first described, with an understanding that is born of sympathy, the misery, the sordidness, the wretchedness of the lives of the toilers. Later Thomas Hood reiterated the same story with poignant reality. Shelley, that buoyant and kindly spirit, struck a chord of defiance in behalf of his fellow men. He bid them wake to the consciousness of their strength. He bid

them use that strength in their own defense. And he held out to them the hope of victory. And again, William Morris hailed them with words of good cheer, of fellowship, of *camaraderie*. The lowly Millet pictured the peasant in the field with head low and shoulders bent. The mighty Meunier molded the miner in clay in the same attitude.

In our own time Arturo Giovannitti shoots his "Arrows in the Gale," and John Masfield consecrates his life to the song "of the maimed, of the halt and the blind in the rain and the cold." There is a gleam of beauty in all of these songs, but for the most part they are a record of the poverty, of the suffering, of the misery and the indignity of those who toil. The bent attitude of the worker, pre-eminently in Millet's portrayal of him, is symbolic of the humility and of the lack of dignity of Labor. Most of the songs of Labor have been cries of

pain; shouts of rebellion, calls to arms. Never yet have they been songs of joy. When will they be that?

They will be that when laboring men and women throw off the yoke of humility and declare their right to the fruits of their toil. They will be songs of joy as soon as men and women reclaim the dignity of Labor, that dignity of which they were robbed not while they were asleep, but while they were hard at work; when work will have become an inward urge and not an outward force. And finally, they will be songs of joy, when men and

women *take* that which is theirs by right, without asking nor even demanding it—for only those rights are ours which we are willing to *take* even at the risk of our lives. Then only will the singer be able to sing the song of joy, the true song of Labor! Then only will the last words of *The Voice of Toil* ring true:

“Come, shoulder to shoulder ere earth grows older!
The Cause spreads over land and sea;
How the world shaketh, and fear awaketh,
And joy at last for thee and me.”

Prohibition: A Crime and a Menace

WHY do the opponents of prohibition always base their arguments on the claim that prohibition doesn't prohibit?

The claim is, of course, true; for prohibition under present conditions is a joke, and worse besides. But in making that fact their leading argument they beg the question at the start and play into the hands of the Bryans and other such “wise guys,” and the asses who put up the coin for these.

For if the “Rum Demon” were one hundredth part the devouring monster that the fanatics claim, a way could be and ought to be found to end forever its career—in fact, would have been found long, long ere this.

If one-tenth of the nonsense and “statistics” talked by the prohibitionists were true, we should all be maniacs, imbeciles, degenerates and weaklings—such of us as might be left.

If one-tenth of the rubbish—so-called expert medical opinion—which is dinned into the ears of children in the public schools by the old maid teachers were really true, the “rumsoaked” Slavs, Teutons, Latins and Anglo-Saxons would necessarily have perished from the earth through physical and mental degeneracy.

If, as is taught, alcohol causes frightful diseases of the body and mind, which are passed on to the children by heredity; if the offspring of drunkards were imbeciles and dipsomaniacs and the like, then the Indo-European races never could have survived thousands of years of alcoholic indulgence. They necessarily would have become teetotalers or must have perished, and today all Europe and America would be inhabited by those prohibitionists par excellence, the engaging Turks, Kurds and Arabs.

Prohibition is a crime against the liberty of the individual and a menace to the nation. I oppose prohibition, not because it is difficult of enforcement, but because it would be dangerous to the progress and welfare of any people to enforce it.

I maintain that, instead of being a curse, alcohol is the handmaiden of intellectual and material progress, and that history abundantly proves it.

I contend that the races that have brought the world up from barbarism to civilization and lead the world today are “rumsoaked,” as the prohibitionists are so fond of saying. Not only so, but races are vigorous in body and virile in mind almost in the ratio that they consume alcohol. Millions of the earth's inhabitants never touch alcohol, such as the great bulk of the Chinese, the East Indians, the Arabs and the Mohammedans of all kinds. Show me such and I will show you a people standing still or sliding backward in the evolution of humanity. All history teaches the same lesson.

Wine drinking Greece and Rome have left their imperishable imprint upon the thought, the art, the literature, the government, of all time as no other nations have ever done.

Later, when Europe had slumped backward into ignorance and superstition, came the wineless hosts of Mohammed and attempted to conquer the degraded, “rumsoaked” Europeans, constantly at war among themselves. Surely if total abstinence ever had a golden opportunity to show its vast superiority over drunkenness, that was the time. Yet the “rummies” of Charles Martel and Charlemagne drove back the water drinkers. When the roystering Spaniards landed in Mexico and Peru they met

peoples well along in civilization for that period, but without, if I remember correctly, the alcohol drinking habit. Which proved the more virile, brave and intelligent? Ask history.

When the Mayflower landed at Plymouth Rock its pious travelers, carrying their bottle of booze ashore with their household effects, ran afoul of a husky, warlike red race of teetotalers. How long did the water drinkers keep their land from the Pilgrims, whose descendants were the guys who put “make” in Jamaica rum, and who at last accounts were still able to match muscles or wits with any total abstainers whatever at a ratio of about five to one?

The old South before the Civil War produced statesmen, thinkers, soldiers, men of learning and women of culture, courage and refinement. Physically and mentally the Southerners were unexcelled, whereas they should have been idiots and weaklings, according to the affecting philosophy taught in our public schools through the brow-beating of our pious prohibitionist, for was not a decanter on every sideboard, a “still” on nearly every farm, everybody drinking as a matter of course, and nearly everybody descended from the “souses” of Great Britain?

Whence came the bold and gallant rovers that built the British Empire; that found America and made it their own; that have girdled the earth and taken what they desired; that fought their way to the Poles?

Whence came the men who have led the world in science, in art, in government, in learning, for a thousand years—who tame the lightning and make it their servant, who talk across vast oceans, who fly like birds and travel under the sea?

Do these workers of wonders come from the water drinkers of the world? I trow not. Almost, if not quite, without exception they spring from nations “rumsoaked” for centuries.

Consider, if you please, the Germans—huge eaters and drinkers! Has anybody noticed any lack of physical or mental vigor after their age-old debauch as a race? I trow not.

Now, there must be a reason for all this. It could not be merely coincidental that all the arguments of the prohibitionists are made absurd and ridiculous by the facts of history.

I am far from saying that alcohol would make every race progressive. On the contrary, it probably hastens the extinction of a people incapable of development and progress—e. g., the American Indian and the Kongo savage. But the virile races need alcohol, and, needing it, they use it. If it were bad for them, these conquerors of the world and of the secrets of nature, the peoples who lead the world now and have led it in the past in progress and civilization, would either have discarded it long ago or it would have made them serfs and weaklings and degenerates instead of masters and conquerors.

PRISON MEMOIRS OF AN ANARCHIST

By Alexander Berkman

“One will search far before finding a more powerful picture of what deeds are perpetrated in the name of justice.”

—San Francisco “Bulletin.”

512 pages, illustrated. \$1.15 postpaid.

THE BLAST

Revolutionary Labor Paper
Published every 1st and 15th of the month
569 Dolores St., San Francisco, Cal.

Mail Address, Box 661

Phone, Park 499

Alexander Berkman, Editor and Publisher
E. B. Morton, Associate Editor M. E. Fitzgerald, Manager

SUBSCRIPTION

\$1.00 Yearly 60c Six Months 5c Copy

Bundle rates 2½c per copy in bundles of ten.

Advertising rates on application.

Entered as second-class matter at the postoffice at San Francisco, Cal., January 14, 1916, under the Act of March 3, 1879.

Will Organized Labor Help?

Tom Mooney

A NEW institution has sprung into activity. Its purpose is primarily the making of profits out of the war game, out of the wholesale slaughter of the workers by the workers, with the instruments of their own creation. But in order to have this war game carried out to the success of those who benefit from it, the opposing sides in the game must be somewhat equally matched, for duration, because the longer the game goes on the more profits the Steel Trust, the Standard Oil Company, the Du Pont Powder Company and the rest of their ilk, make out of the spilling of the workers' blood.

The Pacific Coast Defense League has a mission in this game. It plays the part of doctor, and it also has the aid of many specialists for the purpose of curing the sick and fast dying militia. Among them, and chief in importance, are two labor specialists: Andrew J. Gallagher, past president San Francisco Labor Council, and Tom Finn, Union Labor sheriff and member of the Stablemen's Union. The former is cabinet chairman of the League's labor committee; the latter, cabinet chairman of the publicity committee. These posts have been allotted to labor, as labor is the determining factor in this war business; it either makes it or breaks it. The next most important post in the cabinet is filled by E. W. Wilson, president of the International Banking Corporation. He is chairman of finance and the treasurer of the League. The International Banking Corporation, comparatively of recent origin, is one of the most gigantic financial combines ever formed in the world. It represents the Standard Oil, the Steel Trust, Morgan & Co., and all the other big international capitalist interests. This is fine companionship for two supposedly labor men in the business of giving the militia a clean bill of health.

I have in my possession a copy of the constitution of the League. To give an insight into the work of this organization, it is well to quote some of its purposes:

(Fourth). "It is also the object of the League to assist in bringing the National Guard of California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Arizona and New Mexico, to a higher degree of efficiency, as well as to a higher degree of popularity, with the great masses of our citizens in those Western States, and to that end to do all in its power to have the laws of those States so amended that the practice and duty on the part of the constituted authorities of calling the National Guard into service and action during industrial disputes and strikes be abolished; and to the end that the hostility that has heretofore arisen between labor and our National Guards may be eradicated, and to the further end that labor may unhesitatingly and with unhampered and unprejudiced patriotism join the ranks of these National Guards in times of peace, as well as in times of war, should war be forced upon us."

(Fifth). "It is also the object of said League to encourage and bring about in the schools and educational institutions of those Western States a healthy physical and military training of the male students, with a proper appropriation of funds therefore, so that with as little loss of time and inconvenience as possible they shall become bodily strong, robust and healthy, and at the same time become skilled and trained in military science,

and that the laws of said States governing the education of the young should be so moulded and amended as to bring about the results herein outlined. Also that laws be made to permit such male students to form, or join, cadet companies, composed of the students at the same educational institutions, and which shall provide for their equipment."

The "fifth object" of this League was forwarded to the San Francisco Board of Education, in the form of a resolution asking the board officially to approve by resolution the establishment of military training in *all* standard schools.

The Board of Education turned them down in no uncertain terms. Part of their resolution follows: "Resolved, That such establishment of cadet companies be entirely voluntary upon the part of the students and supplementary to their usual school exercises and outside of the usual school hours; that it in no respect take the place of the usual courses in physical training; and further resolved, That the secretary be instructed to send a copy of these resolutions to the committee on cadets and schools of the Pacific Defense League. Report approved and resolution adopted by unanimous vote."

One of the Board of Education's members in speaking on this matter said: "The schools are for the children to learn their lessons, and not to learn how to kill people." Now the question is, will the San Francisco Labor Council give this outfit a recommendation, or will it put a crimp in their rotten scheme? A. J. Gallagher is a representative labor leader; he has asked organized labor to consider this matter, and is urging favorable action upon it. He is a cabinet member of the League. He tried to get other labor men of prominence to act on the labor committee of the League, but after attending one meeting they refused to have anything more to do with it. The following unions have taken a stand against it: Waiters, barbers, butchers, riggers and stevedores, machinists and molders. Many other labor bodies are considering similar action.

It is the duty of every worker to have his union take a stand against the League, its aims and objects. The ten governors of the above mentioned States are respective numerical vice-presidents of the League. The cabinet has four capitalists, two lawyers, two labor men, one priest, one adjutant general, one legislative representative. These men constitute the respective chairmen of as many executive committees of the League; they can select as many in their given field as they want to. A great deal might be said about the motives of these men in this organization, but space will not permit it. It will suffice if I say that I agree with the sentiments of a worker in this community when he said that if they are not getting paid by labor's enemies they are scabbing on the job. This move of the League to trap the workers must be pushed back in the teeth of the labor crushers.

A Group That Does Things

Reb Raney

IN San Francisco there is an Italian group called Gruppo Anarchico. It appears to be made up of young men chiefly, though a few women attend its sessions. It holds forth in a dingy club room at 1602 Stockton street, where its members go to read revolutionary periodicals, hear red-blooded speakers and take active part in work which has intelligent resistance for its base. The work consists in *doing* things instead of talking about them; and that is why this particular circle has more meaning to it than twenty-seven hundred assortments of Socialistic confab.

On the window of the club room is a sign which reads: "GRUPPO ANARCHICO—VOLONTA." It is big, clear, done in red—and not a letter is missing. Worked in between the lines is a sketch of mountain peaks, with the flaming sun rising above them. Inside, the walls speak eloquently, with their picture of Montjuich, a print of the five Haymarket victims, pictures of Giordano Bruno and Francisco Ferrer, a number of revolutionary posters, and such inspiring placards as, "You aspire to liberty? Fools! Have the strength and liberty will come by itself." Numerous revolutionary booklets, newspapers, etc., are fastened on with clothes pins to a railing midway up the wall and are

strung out the entire length of the hall, easily accessible to all who care to read them. A home-made desk-bookcase in the rear of the hall seems to be a sort of storehouse for excess literature.

I am told this group has no officers; that its members come and go as they please; that all contributions are voluntary, including the literature; that the door of the hall is *never* locked, notwithstanding the fact that the club room is on the ground floor; that *anybody* is welcome to come in and read to his heart's content; and that, most interesting of all, nobody even knows how many members this circle has. Each member stands responsible for his own acts, but cooperates with other members, all of whom are equally responsible. There isn't anything regular about this aggregation, as far as I can learn. It rests on a foundation of interest, intelligence, spontaneity and courage. Further than that, it just carries out its own wishes and never seems to think of asking leave of any official dignitary.

To illustrate: At the March 10 mass meeting, held in San Francisco to protest against Emma Goldman's arrest, free handbills were given out on which was printed information about preventives. It was simple information, plain enough for any man or woman to read and profit from. One of the Italian boys, interested in this circle, got one of the handbills and took it to his group's meeting place. The idea was instantly recognized as a good one, and one member of the circle forthwith offered to give \$10 toward the printing of 20,000 of these bills in the Italian language, so that every man and woman in that district might *know* how to regulate the size of their families. More individuals came up with cash, and the result was that 20,000 leaflets were printed and passed out as freely as water. Then this happened:

One of those blue-birds known as policemen called at the club room and asked a member of the circle, Joseph Macario, who happened to be there, the what, how and why of the group's activity along birth control lines. Now Joseph Macario is beautiful to look at. There is nothing of the liar about him. He therefore didn't hedge, but answered in a way that earned for him an invitational command to call at the "Chief's" headquarters. Joseph went, not in the least ashamed for what he had done, but proud of the fact that he had done a good act, a helpful act, boldly, thoroughly and openly. The Chief looked him over, asked "why," and the boy answered this: "You know these things; you use them; why shouldn't I and the rest of us?" The Chief's answer was short and sweet. He used three words. He said to the key turner, "Lock him up." But there are bubbles in Italian blood. When you scratch it you are liable to get an effervescent reaction, which is just what happened in this case. An Italian attorney, Charles Sferlazzo, interested himself straightway, bailed the boy out, and now there promises to be a lively contest over the right of strangers, official or otherwise, to regulate bedroom affairs. The case is to come up this week, and the Italian boy is not going to be alone.

Another light on this case is this: Since the leaflets were printed priests have stopped to read those which were pasted up on the window of the club's quarters. By any chance can it be that the men in black recognized that such effrontery meant less births, less marriages, less funerals and therefore less fees, not to speak of the abatement of respect for mystery mongers, and decided for their own sakes that it would be well to stamp such efforts as "obscene" and thereby put an end to them? Just an idea, of course, but somehow it sticks.

The most important part about the work of these rebels is that they had the courage to stand back of their acts. They signed the name and address of their group on the leaflets they gave out, and they headed the leaflet with this significant announcement:

WORKERS! Procreate Only When You Like!

Numerous families increase the misery that is great already among the poor masses of workers. The capitalist vampires, by means of the priest, morally condemn the use of scientific means in order not to have children. This they do by threatening "hell" to those who intelligently refuse to put into the world numerous "unlucky"

(unfortunate) ones. And by means of politicians, judges and jailers they make laws, condemn and jail everybody—all those who try to diffuse among the people scientific knowledge. And indeed they tried, a short time ago, Margherita Sanger. They convicted Anderlini in the State of Illinois. A few days ago they arrested Emma Goldman in New York, and they threaten trouble to all those who have the courage to tell you the truth and let you know this practical means to prevent conception.

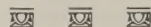
Joseph Macario stated that the information wasn't given out in the hope of solving the social question, but to protest against authority; "and by this to voice a stern protest against all limitations of free social development—on the part of consecrated authorities."

Last evening I went over to the club room of this circle to hear Alexander Berkman speak. We were a number, including Jake Margolis, the Pittsburgh attorney, who is to defend David Caplan in his coming trial. Both Berkman and Margolis talked to the crowd which filled the hall to overflowing. Everyone in the place listened with wrapt attention, including a number of gum-shoe tale bearers who took slurred notes in the rear of the place. I can't begin to outline Berkman's talk here, but it was fine.

He told them intelligent resistance was the key to attainment under the present social system; that what was good for the crowd was good for the man; that anything, everything that served to make people discontented and actively and effectively resistant in their own defense was beneficial; that the man who ties a rope around your neck and accuses you of "disorder" if you attempt to undo the knot, is a bully and a faker and unworthy of the slightest consideration. Margolis, too, dwelt on the absolute necessity of throwing off imposed burdens, no matter in what form they present themselves. And at the finish both were roundly applauded. There were enough red bubbles in that hall to make a pudding that would reach to Mars.

After the meeting I learned that on the night before 6000 preventative leaflets had been placed in the mail boxes of as many citizens by the members of this group. They had confined their distribution to the Italian quarter and, of course, all the handbills were printed in Italian. Ten members had done the work, voluntarily, fearlessly, determinedly. Which only proves what Wendell Phillips said—that a dozen or so *determined* men can commit a revolution over night.

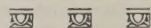
Fine examples are these youth, fiery, conscious, clear sighted. They know what ails them and they are not going to be over-delicate in putting an end to the nuisance. Which recalls the American brand of "bravery." What an invigorating sight it would be could we but see our native drudges take heart and emulate these dark-skinned defiers! Perhaps they will—when they see it is safe. More than one man has finally made his base by walking.



Pierre Ramus Free!

I AM happy to be able to inform the American friends and comrades of Pierre Ramus (Rudolph Grossman) that *he is free*. I have just received this good news from him. The various reports about his sentence to 20 years' and life imprisonment, were exaggerated. Comrade Ramus writes me that he has just been released after serving three months for anti-militarist agitation in Austria.

A. B.



THE BLAST PLEDGE FUND

Seattle, Wash., monthly pledge for six months:	
S. Cohen	\$5.00
A. Snellenberg	1.00
A. Halpern	1.00
Morris Greenberg	1.00
L. Berg	.50
H. Lerner	.50
Berkeley, Cal.:	
Stella Smith (weekly)	1.00
Collection meeting, New York:	
Per R. Edelson	2.67

Young Folks

III.

"Isn't money everything?" cried Tom. "Why, if you have plenty of money, you can get everything you want."

"That's a mistake, Tom. Suppose you are on board of ship, with plenty of money in your pockets. Now, suppose some accident happens and the ship is wrecked. Such things happen, you know. Perhaps you and a few other passengers are saved somehow and land on a desert island. You have money, but there is no food. Could you keep alive on the money, Tom?"

"No; of course not."

"Then you'd starve to death, in spite of all the money you might have. So you see, money is not everything. It is nothing at all unless there is something to be gotten for it."

"Then what good is money?"

"Money alone is of no use. It is only so much gold, silver and paper, and you can't live on that. You need food, clothing, houses and other such things to keep alive."

"Then we could do without money?"

"Of course we could. In old times people lived without money."

"Could we live now, too, without money?"

"To be sure. We would make the things we need, just as we do now, and then use them."

"Then we wouldn't have to buy them?"

"No. And therefore we wouldn't need money."

"So money is only to buy things with?"

"That's all. It's called exchange. Money is a means of exchange."

"I don't understand."

"Well, it's this way. Take your father, for instance. He's a carpenter and he's working in Jones' factory. Well, yesterday he made a table and he was paid \$3.00 for it. That is, he traded or exchanged his day's work for \$3.00. You told me that you wanted a pair of pants. Your father could use the \$3.00 to buy you a pair. That means that he traded his day's work for \$3.00 and then again traded the \$3.00 for a pair of pants for you. That's exchange."

"So money is only to trade or exchange things?"

"That's all it is good for. You got to have things before you can exchange them. And if you haven't the things, money is of no use."

"But if we have the things, we could exchange them without money."

"Of course."

"Then why do we use money?"

"That's only to make a profit."

"What is profit?"

"Profit is what you get over and above what you really earn. Take Jones, for instance. Your father and other men work a whole week in the factory and make a lot of furniture. Say that altogether Jones' workers got paid \$300.00 for the week's work. Besides their work, the cost of the lumber and running the factory (lighting, cleaning, keeping the machinery in repair, etc.), may amount, let us say, to \$200.00. The furniture made that week, then, costs altogether \$500.00. Now suppose I want to buy that furniture. Jones asks me \$1,000 for it. The difference between what it cost to make the furniture—\$500—and the price Jones gets for it—\$1,000—will be profit."

"Then, I suppose, it is this profit that Jones keeps for himself?"

"Exactly. He profits by the work of your father and other workmen."

"Then he must have bought his factory with such profits, and that's why you said his factory didn't really belong to him but to the workers who made it."

"I see you are beginning to understand."

"But that means that Jones is really robbing my father by making a profit on his work when Jones himself does nothing to earn it."

"Yes, it is robbery."

"Now I see. That's why father can't afford to buy me new clothes, or other things we need."

"Yes; Jones, as well as every employer, robs his workers of the greater part of what they produce."

"But why does father let him?"

"I suppose because he doesn't understand he is robbed."

"I'll tell father right away about it."

A.

ALL-DAY GRAND PICNIC

Sunday, April 16th, 1916
Beginning 10 a. m.

BELLEVUE PARK

Music, Dancing, FREE Barbecue, Clams, Spaghetti, Wine. Free Souvenir

Address by

ALEXANDER BERKMAN

Benefit Group Volontá and THE BLAST

Ticket 50c

Directions: Take No. 16 car on Kearny St.; get off at 34th Ave. Ten minutes' walk to Park.

Workmen's Circle, Radical Br., No. 511

Social, Concert and Dance

SUNDAY, APRIL 9th, 8 P. M. SHARP

LA BOHEME HALL

1530 Ellis Street

Come and Have a Good Time

ADMISSION 15c

In Home Colony: For Sale

At a sacrifice, a two-acre chicken ranch, modern four-room house, good well water, large chicken house, chicken coops and all implements; 70 large fruit bearing trees, 10 years old; also small fruit, strawberries, raspberries, logan and blackberries. Good view, three blocks from wharf, near school house. Good terms. Inquire at office of THE BLAST. Owner must leave the State.

OUR BOOK SHOP

569 Dolores St., San Francisco

By PETER KROPOTKIN	postage
The Great French Revolution, 1789-1793	\$2.25 .20
Mutual Aid	1.00 .15
Memoirs of a Revolutionist	2.00 .20
Conquest of Bread	.50 .05
Fields, Factories and Workshops	.50 .05
Modern Science and Anarchism	.25
Anarchist Communism	.05
War and Capitalism	.05
An Appeal to the Young	.05
By EMMA GOLDMAN	postage
Anarchism and Other Essays (with Biography)	\$1.00 .10
Social Significance of the Modern Drama	1.00 .15
Anarchism and What it Really Stands For	.10
Syndicalism	.05
Patriotism	.05
Marriage and Love	.10
Victims of Morality and Failure of Christianity	.10
Mother Earth, Anarchist Monthly, 10c a copy	\$1.00 a year
Bound Volumes	2.00 .15

PRISON MEMOIRS OF AN ANARCHIST, By Alexander Berkman	\$1.25 .15
SELECTED WORKS OF VOLTAIRINE de CLEYRE	1.00 .15
ANARCHISM, By Dr. Paul Eltzbacher	1.00 .15
A clear-cut, impartial analysis of the various Anarchist theories by a scientific investigator.	
LIBERTY and the GREAT LIBERTARIANS	1.00 .15
Compiled by Charles T. Sprading. The first anthology on liberty. An indispensable book.	
THE FRUITS OF CULTURE, by Leo Tolstoi	.25c
THE EGO AND HIS OWN, by Max Stirner	\$0.75 .15
FREE SPEECH FOR RADICALS, by Theodore Schroeder	.25
SPEECHES OF THE CHICAGO ANARCHISTS	.75 .10
SYNDICALISM AND THE CO-OPERATIVE COMMONWEALTH, by Pataud and Pouget	.50 .10
SONGS OF LOVE AND REBELLION, by Covington Hall	.50
THE LITTLE REVIEW, Margaret Anderson, Editor (Chicago). A bold literary iconoclast	15c a copy
EVERYMAN, monthly by Luke North (Los Angeles)	10c a copy

Come to the FIRST OF MAY CELEBRATION SOCIAL AND DANCE

Given at

La Boheme Hall

1530 Ellis Street

Sunday, April 30th, 1916, 8 p. m.

ADMISSION 15 CENTS

Eve of First of May

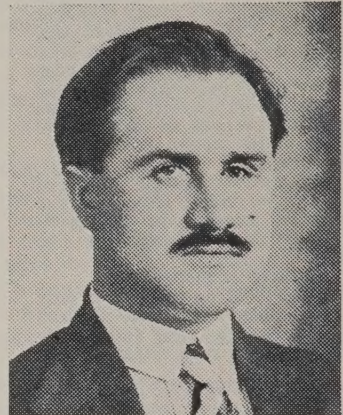
Auspices of Current Events Club

WORKERS, this concerns YOU!



DAVID CAPLAN

There is a NOISY war in Europe. In this country a SILENT war is going on—the war between Labor and Capital. The victims of this war are all from the ranks of the workers. Your brothers fill the penitentiaries because they fought YOUR battles. Mathew Schmidt is the latest victim. Will you help save the next prey chosen by the bosses?



MATHEW SCHMIDT

DAVID CAPLAN MASS MEETING

Carpenters' Hall, 112 Valencia St.
TUESDAY, APRIL 4th, 7.30 P. M.
(DOORS OPEN AT 7 P. M.)

Come to learn the important NEW developments in the case

ADMISSION FREE

SPEAKERS:

CHARLES ERSKINE SCOTT WOOD, of Portland, Poet, author and attorney.

WALTER M. HOLLOWAY, President Rationalist Ass'n of America

TOM MOONEY, Secretary International Workers Defense League

ED MORGAN, Poet and speaker

ALEXANDER BERKMAN, Author and lecturer

ED NOLAN, Machinist and organizer

WM. McDEVITT, Speaker and writer.

CARLO TRESKA, of New York, in Italian

Auspices International Workers Defense League of S. F., and Current Events Club